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A METHOD TO IMPROVE THE SELECTION OF NAVAL OFFICER FOR EARLY PROMOTION

JOHN C. MAPE

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John C. Mape

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by

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Commander, United States Navy

Submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
MANAGEMENT

United States Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, California

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This work is accepted as fulfilling
the research paper requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
MANAGEMENT
from the
United States Naval Postgraduate School

ABSTRACT

Each year Naval officer selection boards select highly qualified officers for early promotion. These boards base their determinations upon the officers' records, primarily the Report on the Fitness of Officers. Presently, these reports do not contain sufficiently valid information for this prupose. This study proposes the use of peer ratings to increase the amount of valid information available to selection boards. From sociometric research conducted with peer ratings in the past twenty-five years, the validity and reliability of such ratings have been established. Based upon these findings, a model has been developed, which, if adopted for use, can provide selection boards with the degree of valid information required for the early promotion of outstanding officers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. Admiral Arleigh Burke, former Chief of Naval Operations, has stated:

> There is one element in the profession of arms that transcends all others in importance. This is the human element. No matter what the weapons of the future may be, no matter how they are to be employed in war or international diplomacy, man will still be the most important factor in naval operations.[1]

Currently, the Navy is engaged in an intensive race for technological superiority of weapons systems. There is no denying the importance of this continuing race, for superiority of weapons is one of the two key elements in the maintenance of naval supremacy to achieve national objectives. The second key element is effective manpower, which can be translated today as 600,000 naval personnel, trained and dedicated to the successful performance of the many tasks assigned to the United States Navy.

The leadership of naval personnel is vested in the officer corps. As leaders, naval officers are the example to whom others look for guidance, inspiration, and for a standard upon which to base their own conduct and beliefs. Although the Navy is under great pressure of continuing need to develop the finest aircraft, the best submarines, the most far-ranging carriers, in a word, the entire complex of weapons, the selection of effective leaders remains its most important task. But in

[1] M. E. Wolf (comp.) Naval Leadership (Annapolis: U. S. Naval Institute, 1959), p. v.

a Navy of some 70,000 officers, identification of the best leaders, in order to select them for promotion, is no simple task. Identification of leaders is the task of selection boards appointed by the Secretary of the Navy. Board members make their selections based upon the records of each individual officer under consideration.

It is difficult to deny the fact that the present selection system is highly successful. It has kept the Navy well supplied with officers capable of planning, directing, and controlling the greatest maritime fighting force in the world. In general, this system has enjoyed the confidence of the officers themselves who realize that only the "best fitted" should be permitted to advance up the promotion ladder. The determination of those "best fitted" is based primarily upon the Report on the Fitness of Officers, the most valuable source of information in each officer's official record. As well be seen, the fitness report does not always contain the high degree of validity required by a selection board. Thus, the board is often faced with a dilemma; namely, is it actually selecting those who are best qualified for promotion? This dilemma is extant in every selection but is intensified in the process of selection for early promotion.

The policy of early promotion requires the board to select those who are "outstandingly outstanding". Although every officer enjoys equal opportunity with his contemporaries for promotion, no officer would deny the early promotion of a truly outstanding officer who possesses extraordinary talent and potential. The Navy, by permitting early selection, recognizes the fact that there will generally be within each year group a small percentage of officers who are "head and

shoulders" above the rest of the group. It is to the Navy's advantage to rapidly promote such individuals in order to utilize their abilities more efficiently.

Within each year group at least twenty percent of the officers are evaluated as outstanding in accordance with fitness report ratings. From such a group the selection board must determine which officers are truly outstanding and deserving of early promotion. Due to the lack of completely valid information within the fitness reports, this determination is prone to error. This paper is concerned with the problem of selection for early promotion presently based upon data with insufficient validity. Valid judgments by board members depend upon valid information. To provide selection boards with additional valid information upon which to base their decisions for early promotion is the purpose of this paper. The method proposed for accomplishing this purpose is the adoption of a peer rating technique to naval officer evaluation procedures.

II. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Nothing is more vital to the United States than the maintenance of the highest leadership available in all fields of endeavor. Industrial leadership insures the continuing growth of the economy. Leadership in government insures the preservation and expansion of our democratic way of life. Military leadership insures the protection of American democracy from encroachment by any foreighn power. It is through Naval leadership that this protection will be maintained. To meet the increasingly complex demands placed upon it, the Navy must select as

leaders only those who are best qualified to lead--those officers with knowledge, foresight, courage, and ability.

This study is important in that it proposses a method which can improve the validity of selections for early promotion. Thereby, the required high caliber of naval leadership will be insured. In addition, the confidence of the officer corps in early promotion will be increased. Without the conficence of a selection process based upon equal opportunity for the best qualified, it is feared that many outstanding officers would leave the service. Currently, the Navy is deeply concerned with the voluntary exodus of too many highly rated officers. Perhaps this is a reflection of their loss of confidence in the opportunities of equitable selection for further promotion. If such is the case, this exodus can be curtailed by adoption of the proposed method which will increase confidence in the promotion system.

III. PREVIEW OF ORGANIZATION

In order to better appreciate the need for supplementary information in selecting officers for early promotion, Chapter II presents the policy and manner of the early promotion concept. Early selection is based upon the Report on the Fitness of Officers. This report will be analyzed in Chapter III, in which it will be concluded that the primary cause of insufficient validity in the reports is due to errors made by the raters.

The method proposed for increasing the amount of valid information available to selection boards is based upon the peer rating technique. This technique will be examined in Chapter IV, in order to substantiate its validity and reliability. Then the model developed for the applica-

tion of peer ratings to naval officer evaluation will be presented. A summary containing recommendations for adoption of the peer rating method will be contained in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

EARLY PROMOTION

The object of any promotion system is to assure superior leadership. The Navy is an hierarchical command structure inherent in any effective military organization. A command structure to be effective must possess vitality through the effort, enthusiasm, and loyalty of its officers. Since the effectiveness of naval command is directly dependent upon the caliber of the officer corps, the promotion system of the Navy must be a blend of service and individual requirements. It must blend the service requirement, or merit, with the individual need for security and incentive.

Command Structure. As established by the Officer Personnel Act of 1947, the command structure within the Navy is based upon three factors:

(1) Grade Distribution--the number of officers in each grade. This is a constant, basically determined by the size and organization of the entire Naval force. Distribution is fundamentally a military requirement. However, it fills the personal need of the individual in that it provides an avenue for advancement. As prescribed by law, the total number of officers is set equal to 7 per cent of the authorized strength of the Regular Navy enlisted members. Numbers authorized within each grade also determined by law as percentages of total officer strength:

Rear Admiral	0.75%
Captain	6.00%
Commander	12.00%
Lieutenant Commander	18.00%
Lieutenant	24.75%
Lieutenant (junior grade and Ensign Combined)	38.50%

It is from these authorized numbers that vacancies are measured each year by the Secretary of the Navy. Numbers to be promoted are based upon these vacancies.

(2) Flow Rate--the rate at which an officer progresses through the grades. Normally officers reach the promotion zone to the next higher grade about the time they attain the total years of commissioned service shown in Table II-1.

TABLE II-1

OFFICER PROMOTION FLOW RATE

GRADE	(1)*	(2)**
ENS	1½	1½
LTJG	4	4
LT	10	10
LCDR	16	16
CDR	20	22
CAPT	29	29

*(1) Current total years of service in grade to reach promotion zone to the next higher grade.

**(2) Planned total years of service in grade to reach promotion zone when flow rate becomes stabilized.

(3) Attrition--separation of officers from the Navy, both voluntary (natural attrition) and involuntary (forced attrition). This is the third promotion control element. Unless vacancies are created in higher grades, under the grade limitations of the law pointed out in (1) above, advancement to higher grades would be curtailed. Natural attrition is constant but obviously inadequate to meet the envisioned promotion flow rate desired. Necessarily there must be additional vacancies created by other means.

Forced attrition is assessed to the extent necessary to insure maintenance of a normal promotion flow within the limits of grade dis-

tribution. To insure equal opportunities for succeeding year groups of officers, which may contain widely varying numbers, forced attrition is determined for each grade. The resulting attrition percentage is then applied to the current year's promotions in determining the number of officers who must be placed in the promotion zone to be selected for vacancies known or expected. The number of officers placed in the promotion zone in excess of the number to be selected represents the minimum number that must be failed of selection.

Early Promotion Defined. In order to understand the concept of early promotion, it is first necessary to appreciate the meaning of promotion zones. The Secretary of the Navy is required by law to establish a promotion zone of officers for promotion to the next higher grade as of the date he convenes a selection board to consider officers of that grade for promotion. As discussed above the size of a promotion zone is a function of known and expected vacancies which will exist during the ensuing twelve months and the application of the forced attrition variable. Consequently, the promotion zone always consists of a number of those eligible officers most senior in the grade under consideration who have not previously been in a promotion zone to the next higher grade.

Of the total established number to be promoted, the selection board is authorized by Law, Title 10, U.S. Code, to select 5 percent from beneath the zone. Those officers below the zone are eligible for selection if they have completed the minimum number of years in present grade as listed in Table II-2.

TABLE II-2

YEARS IN GRADE FOR PROMOTION ELIGIBILITY		
GRADE	(1)*	(2)**
LTJG	2	2½
LT	4	6
LCDR	4	6
CDR	5	6
CAPT	3	7

*(1) Minimum required service in grade.
**(2) Planned stabilized service in grade.

Thus, early promotion is defined as promotion of those officers selected who are beneath the established zone but who have met the selection eligibility requirements of minimum years of service in present grade. All officers in and above the promotion zone who are not recommended for promotion to the next higher grade are failed of selection. Those eligibles below the zone who are not recommended are not failed of selection.

Emphasis upon Early Promotion. Although early promotions were authorized by the Officer Career Act of 1947, early promotion received little emphasis until the mid 1950's. At that time the Secretary of the Navy, then Mr. Charles Thomas, addressed a letter to the president of a selection board.[2] In this letter he used a phrase, "head and shoulders", and applied it to those officers who demonstrate early in their careers exceptional professional and technical qualities well above those of their contempories. The Secretary believed that officers who were "head and shoulders" above their contemporaries should have their superior talents recognized by more rapid advancement on the promotion lists.

[2]L. S. Sabin, "Deep Selection", U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, 86:3, March 1960, p. 46.

In addition to prescribing the numbers of officers to be selected, it is customary for the Secretary of the Navy to address each selection board in order to emphasize certain factors for their consideration in selecting. It is interesting to note that since 1955 early selection has been emphasized in every letter to flag selection boards. These letters contain such statements as:[3]

> Select preeminent officers for early promotion in order to give assurrance to all officers that a career in the Naval Service offers recognition for exceptional ability and performance without prejudicing the normal promotion opportunity for the remainder.
>
> Be aware that recent boards have made a substantial number of their selections from below the normal field of consideration... this trend should continue and further expand.

From such statements it is evident that early promotion is an established policy within the Navy and will continue to receive increased emphasis in the future.

[3]ADM Alfred M. Pride, "Report of the Board to Examine and Recommend Criteria for Selection to Flag Rank in the Navy", (Pride Report), 21 January 1963.

CHAPTER III

REPORT ON THE FITNESS OF OFFICERS

The Report on the Fitness of Officers is the official appraisal form by which all Naval officers are evaluated by their reporting seniors. The importance of this report is obvious from the following quotation from the Bureau of Naval Personnel Manual:

> Reports on the fitness of an officer constitute the most important part of his record. They provide a record of the duty performed and the manner of its performance,...and a statement of his personal characteristics. Fitness reports are the primary means for determining promotion, selection, and assignment of officers. Adequate evaluations are essential to the accomplishment of each of these tasks. The failure of a reporting senior to appraise objectively the performance of any officer under his command is a grave failure to meet a public trust and could constitute an injustice not only to the officer reported on but to other officers as well.[4]

From the above it is evident that the fitness report is a most important document within the Navy. Upon it rests the future of each officer as well as the entire Naval Establishment. Yet, the value of the present reporting system for selection for early promotion is highly questionable, due to the lack of discrimination between and within fitness reports.

Lack of Discrimination. In selecting from beneath the zone the selection board is confronted with the task of locating only those officers who are truly outstanding, who are superior to their contemporaries. However, in each year group the record of fitness reports

[4]United States Navy, Bureau of Naval Personnel Manual, NavPers 15691A, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1959), change no. 3, p. 69.

indicates that at least twenty percent of the officers are superior. With increase in rank the percentage increases. Thus, it is normal to find at least fifty percent of the Captains rated as outstanding. When it is remembered that selection board members take a solemn oath to select officers according to their records, it is evident that they face a dilemma. They must determine just which outstanding officers are actually superior.

The seriousness of this problem of lack of discrimination was evident during the 1959 selection of Commanders to Captains. One member of the board, noting the preponderance of outstanding fitness reports, became curious concerning the average marks assigned to the Commanders under consideration.[5] He took a random sample of one hundred jackets and by using his own conversion scale of 0-4.0 arrived at an average mark of 3.85. When there is only a .15 spread in fitness report marks in the upper half of the officers being considered, it is obvious that identification of the truly outstanding officers for early selection is doubtful.

In addition to the lack of discrimination between records, there is also the lack of comparative data within fitness reports. Reviewing officers find little or no comparative information on an officer's strengths and weaknesses. Frequently, officers are graded as outstanding in every rating factor listed on the report. The case of an individual being actually outstanding in all abilities and qualities is so rare as to be statistically impossible. Yet, in accordance with

[5]Ira E. Hobbs, "Letter to CAPT F. S. Craven, USN, dated September 24, 1963".

fitness report records the Navy has an ample supply of such supermen.

Fortunately, the Navy does possess outstanding officers in its ranks. However, due to the lack of discrimination between and within fitness reports, it is difficult to distinguish the few who are actually "head and shoulders" above their contemporaries. Obviously, many of the records presented to selection boards contain data of questionable validity. Considering the importance of the fitness report, it becomes necessary to determine the reasons for the low validity of many of the outstanding records. The fault lies either with the fitness report or with the raters' use of the report.

Fitness Report. Realizing the necessity for a sound evaluation system, the Navy through the years has constantly revised its rating methods as the human behavioral and psychometric sciences developed. Since 1818, when written appraisals were first introduced into the promotion system, there have been twenty-nine changes to the fitness report form. Twenty-one of these changes have occured since 1900 for an average of a new report format every three years. These changes have ranged from the simple descriptive paragraph report to the present format employing the best techniques for ratings by superiors that the human sciences have to offer. The constant changes are indicative of the Navy's attempt to increase the validity of officer evaluations.

The rating techniques employed in the current fitness report are the following:

1. Graphic Scale--This method, one of the first formal rating techniques developed, evaluates a factor or quality against a continuum, normally, from outstanding to unsatisfactory.

2. Ranking--is the process of rating individuals by arranging them from the highest to the lowest in terms of the characteristic being measured.

3. Forced Choice--Rather than estimating degree of performance or of quality possessed, the rater in this method is required to choose, from several sets of four phases or adjectives, the one which best characterizes the officer and the one which is least descriptive of him.

4. Paired Comparison--The method is a variation of the ranking process discussed above. Each person is compared with all others. Adding up the comparisions will then produce a rank order of each individual.

5. Critical Incidents--Rather than a separate rating method, this is a system for collecting significant facts about ratee performance. The rater is trained to keep a record of favorable or unfavorable critical incidents or behavior, usually on a daily basis. From the compilation of such incidents an evaluation of the person is made.

Each of these techniques has advantages and disadvantages. Incorporated into the current fitness report, depicted in Figures III-1 and III-1A, are the best features of these techniques. Sections fourteen (14) and twenty (20) are combination graphic and ranking scales. The rater, mentally comparing the ratee against a standard of other officers whom he has observed, selects a point along a continuum. Section sixteen (16) is an example of the ranking method with overtones of the forced choice system. The critical incident method permeates the entire report, for in order to achieve objectivity, it is desired that the rater's judgment be based upon factual and repeated observa-

NAVPERS 310 (REV. 4-62)

REPORT ON THE FITNESS OF OFFICERS

1. NAME (Last, first, middle)	2. GRADE	3. USN(R)	4. DESIGNATOR	5. FILE NUMBER

6. SHIP OR STATION	7. DATE REPORTED PRESENT DUTY STATION

8. OCCASION FOR REPORT	9. TYPE OF REPORT	10. PERIOD OF REPORT
☐ PERIODIC ☐ DETACHMENT OF REPORTING SENIOR ☐ DETACHMENT OF OFFICER	☐ REGULAR ☐ CON-CURRENT ☐ SPECIAL	FROM TO:

11. DUTIES (*List principal duties assigned and the number of months during the period for which assigned*)

12. EMPLOYMENT OF COMMAND DURING PERIOD OF THIS REPORT

13. REFERENCE HERE AND APPEND ANY COMMENDABLE OR ADVERSE REPORTS ON THIS OFFICER RECEIVED DURING THE PERIOD OF THIS REPORT

14. PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES (*Evaluate his performance of duty in comparison with other officers of his grade and approximate length of service*)

DUTY ASSIGNMENT	NOT OBS. OR N.A.	Outstanding performance.		Excellent performance. Frequently demonstrates outstanding performance.		Very good performance. Frequently demonstrates excellent performance.		Satisfactory performance. Basically qualified.		Inadequate performance. He is not qualified. (Adverse)
(a) PRESENT ASSIGNMENT										•
(b) SHIPHANDLING AND SEAMANSHIP										•
(c) AIRMANSHIP										•
(d) COLLATERAL DUTIES										•
(e) AS _____ WATCH OFFICER										•
(f) TECHNICAL SPECIALTY (_____)										•
(g) COMMAND POTENTIAL OR ABILITY										•
(h) ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT ABILITY										•

15. OVERALL EVALUATION: (a) In comparison with other officers of his grade and approximate length of service, how would you designate this officer?
(b) For this report period indicate in (b) how many officers of his grade you have designated in each category of (a).

	NOT OBSERVED	One of the highly outstanding officers I know	A very fine officer of great value to the service	A dependable and typically effective officer	An acceptable officer	Unsatisfactory (Adverse)
(a)						•
(b)						

16. DESIRABILITY: Considering (1) the possible requirements of war and peace, (2) this officer's professional and technical competence, and (3) the adaptability of this officer to the varying conditions of naval service, indicate your attitude toward having this officer under your command in the following types of assignments:

	NOT OBSERVED	Particularly desire	Prefer to most	Pleased to have	Satisfied to have	Prefer not to have (Adverse)
(a) OPERATIONAL						•
(b) STAFF OR ADMINISTRATIVE						•
(c) FOREIGN DUTY						•

17. ENTRIES ON THIS REPORT ARE BASED ON (*Check appropriate box*)
☐ DAILY CONTACT AND CLOSE OBSERVATION ☐ FREQUENT OBSERVATION ☐ INFREQUENT OBSERVATION ☐ RECORDS AND REPORTS ONLY

18. FOR FUTURE ASSIGNMENTS:
Based on your observations, for what type of duty do you consider him best qualified for his next assignment at sea and shore?

SEA _____ SHORE _____

Comment, if appropriate

19. NAME, GRADE, FILE NUMBER, DESIGNATOR AND OFFICIAL TITLE OF REPORTING SENIOR.

FIGURE III-1

NAVPERS 310 (REV. 4-62)

20. LEADERSHIP: In comparison with other officers of his grade and approximate length of duty assignment, to what degree has this officer exhibited the following qualities of leadership?

DEFINITIONS

OUTSTANDING - ONE out of 100 - Exceeds ALL others
EXCEPTIONAL - One of the next top FEW - Extraordinary
SUPERIOR - ABOVE the great MAJORITY
EXCELLENT - EQUAL to the majority
ACCEPTABLE - BELOW the majority
MARGINAL - Barely satisfactory
UNSATISFACTORY

	NOT OBSERVED	1 OUT OF 100 OUTSTANDING	EXCEPTIONAL	SUPERIOR	EXCELLENT	ACCEPTABLE	MARGINAL	UNSATISFACTORY (Adverse)
(a) PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE *(Comprehension of all aspects of the profession)*								*
(b) MORAL COURAGE *(To do what he ought to do regardless of consequences to himself)*								*
(c) LOYALTY *(His faithfulness and allegiance to his shipmates, his command, the service and the nation)*								*
(d) FORCE *(The positive and enthusiastic manner with which he fulfills his responsibilities)*								*
(e) INITIATIVE *(His willingness to seek out and accept responsibility)*								*
(f) INDUSTRY *(The zeal exhibited and energy applied in the performance of his duties)*								*
(g) IMAGINATION *(Resourcefulness, creativeness, and capacity to plan constructively)*								*
(h) JUDGMENT *(His ability to develop correct and logical conclusions)*								*
(i) RELIABILITY *(The dependability and thoroughness exhibited in meeting responsibilities)*								*
(j) COOPERATION *(His ability and willingness to work in harmony with others)*								*
(k) PERSONAL BEHAVIOR *(His demeanor, disposition, sociability and sobriety)*								*
(l) MILITARY BEARING *(His military carriage, correctness of uniform, smartness of appearance and physical fitness)*								*
(m) SELF-EXPRESSION (ORAL) *(His ability to express himself orally)*								*
(n) SELF-EXPRESSION (WRITTEN) *(His ability to express himself in writing)*								*

21. COMMENTS: *(Reporting seniors are encouraged to discuss this report with the officer, but not necessarily show it.)*

(a) Make comments regarding any strengths, special accomplishments, contributions to the Naval and National service, or minor weaknesses. (Minor weaknesses must be discussed with the officer)

Have minor weaknesses been discussed with officer? ☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ NOT APPLICABLE

*(b) ADVERSE COMMENTS, if any. Comments in this section are mandatory for adverse or unsatisfactory marks in section 14, 15, 16 and 20. Reports containing adverse matter must be referred for statement pursuant to Art. 1701.8, Navy Regulations. Statement of officer must be attached to this report. (Marks in starred (*) boxes are adverse.)

Has officer seen this report? ☐ YES ☐ NO

(c) What has been the trend of his performance since your last report? ☐ FIRST REPORT ☐ IMPROVING ☐ CONSISTENT ☐ DECLINING

22. DATE FORWARDED	SIGNATURE OF REPORTING SENIOR

23. CONCURRENT REPORT:

DATE FORWARDED	SIGNATURE OF REGULAR REPORTING SENIOR

4-44773

FIGURE III-1A

tions rather than vague memory at the end of a reporting period.

The fitness report is considered to be as nearly perfect an appraisal device as the human scientists can devise. Why, then, does it not contain the degree of validity required for early selection? It is generally believed that the fault lies not with the fitness report but rather in its use by the raters.

Rater Errors. Performance appraisal is a requirement in any selection system based upon merit rather than seniority. Fortunately, omniscience is not a requirement in translating human behavior to valid evaluations. In his study of the ability to judge people Taft concluded that the most important quality was motivation.[6] He found that given a normal degree of intelligence and social adjustment, an individual can generally be relied upon to make a valid judgment assuming that he is properly motivated.

It must be assumed that the Naval Commander in appraising his subordinates is well motivated. What then are the sources of errors committed which reduce the validity of fitness report data? The most common sources are:

(1) Halo Effect--This is the tendency of the rater to grade a person high or low in all rating factors on the basis of the rater's impression of the person relative to one factor or trait. For example, an officer who presents a smart military appearance may be graded high in all traits, such as initiative and loyalty. The latter are completely distinct from the former, but the rater, impressed with military ap-

[6]Ronald Taft, "The Ability to Judge People". Psychological Bulletin, 52:1, January 1955, p. 1-23.

pearance, allows this one characteristic to permeate his judgment on other unrelated qualities. The halo effect results in a slanted report, because, instead of marks assigned on individual traits, the whole document is but a repetition of one factor, possibly a minor one.

(2) Central Tendency--A bias introduced into reports when a rating officer assumes that all of his subordinates should be grouped around an average. This error is generally committed by the rater who fails to distinguish adequately the differences among his personnel.

(3) High-level Tendency--It is often found that raters have an inclination to rank men in high-level jobs consistently higher than those occupying lower-level positions. In addition, years of service or age can affect the ratings. In the Navy there is a tendency to rate Ensigns lower than Lieutenants and so on up the line. Generally, the more senior the rank held or the greater the prestige of the job, the higher the average fitness report marks. It would appear that this error is committed primarily by those who are rating all their personnel, regardless of experience, against an absolute standard. The standard is probably the rater himself. Assuming, for example, that the rater is a Commander, it is perfectly logical for him to rate in order of rank, for it is only natural that the performance of those with greater experience and higher rank will be more similar to his own performance. In other words, an Ensign might possess far greater potential than a Lieutenant, but this potential is not acknowledged by his superior. Instead, he feels that since a Lieutenant ranks higher than an Ensign, the former's potential is naturally greater. The grading of fitness

reports on years of experience is fallacious. Twenty years experience might only be one year's experience times twenty.

(4) The Staff Factor[7]--Officers serving on a large staff are sometimes exposed to a unique rating hazard. Usually, the rough draft of a fitness report is completed by their immediate superior, reviewed up the line and smoothed, and then signed by the officer in command. The "staff factor" is introduced at the point in time when the immediate superior is changed. Now, the officer's report will be composed by an entirely different personality, but the finished version is signed by the same officer in command. An exceptional officer who has been producing outstanding work in the opinion of one superior may be evaluated in the excellent category by the new superior. The succeeding reports will now indicate erroneously a poorer effort on the part of the ratee. Unless a change of appraiser is reflected on the report, the promotion board will be confronted with an apparently significant change in performance.

(5) Leniency Error--This is the error whereby all personnel are rated high on the rating scale primarily through the fear of condemning an officer unless he is rated at least in the excellent category. Thus, if an officer performs his duties well, he is a typically effective naval officer and should be rated as such. On the fitness report form his rating on present assignment of duties should be classified as "Very good performance--frequently demonstrates excellent performance".

[7]Thomas J. Bowen, "A Study of the Officer Fitness Report for the Purpose of Developing a Preparation Manual", A Research Paper, U. S. Naval Postgraduate School, May 1962, p. 17.

However, the rating officer, feeling that his personnel are probably better than the average, will raise this mark into the excellent category. This error is a prevalent one and tends to damage those officers who are more accurately appraised. Knowing that this is a common tendency, the rater finds himself caught in a dilemma as he is confronted with two choices: Dishonesty in his markings or disloyalty to his officers. That this predicament is not new is evident by the following comment made by the OSS assessment staff in reviewing appraisals on their personnel during World War II:

> Many of the raters were military men accustomed to the accepted procedure in the War and Navy Departments of giving high ratings to anyone who had not failed miserably. Despite the fact that they were told that such methods should not be used in the OSS, these raters seem to find themselves unable to abide the usual practice, and non-military raters realizing this refused to penalize their own subordinates by using a different prodedure.[8]

(6) Semantics Error--This is the error created by the fact that many words seldom have a single interpretation. Consider the word, impressive, for example. A rating officer may desire to employ this word in the description of particular strengths of an officer in the comments section of the fitness report. But the word, impressive, might not convey the same meaning to a selection board member as it does to the rater, unless it is supported in the statement. It may be interpreted by the rater to mean "commanding" while to a board member it could mean "imposing". The present rating form attempts to minimize this problem. No longer is a rating officer required to justify a conscientious attempt at an objective appraisal in several sections with a somewhat subjective explanation in another. In addition, the form contains more concise

[8]The OSS Assessment Staff, Assessment of Men (New York: Rhinehart and Company, Inc., 1958), p. 415.

definitions of the terms used in the Leadership section. This improvement should stimulate more objective appraisals and minimize the semantics error.

This accumulation of rater errors obviously tends to degrade the vailidity of the information contained in fitness reports. The Navy's main effort to increase validity has been centered on reduction of the leniency error, which produces highly inflated, closely grouped fitness reports. It attempts to accomplish this by changing the fitness report format periodically, normally about every three to four years. The effects of format change can be seen in Figure III-2.[9] Figure III-2 contains a sample spread of fitness report marks gathered from reports written just prior to and after the introduction of a revised form in 1954. The introduction of the new form caused a spread in the marks chiefly by better defining the factors to be graded. With better definition of terms the rater is more apt to evaluate his personnel with greater preciseness. Commenting about the change in average marks brought about by a change in format, Admiral Hobbs commented that "it is just a matter of time before the new fitness report will be in the same category as the old...It is assumed that BuPers has a new fitness report form in a standby status to use if and when necessary".[10] Of all the proposals which have been made to increase the validity of fitness report data, the most promising, but untired, is rater train-

[9]"A Follow-up Study of the Officer Fitness Report", Bureau of Naval Personnel Research Report 56-1, NAVPERS 18493, (April 30, 1956).

[10]Ira E. Hobbs, "An Improved Method of Evaluation of Officers for Selection and Assignment", Kodiak, July 26, 1957, p. 47.

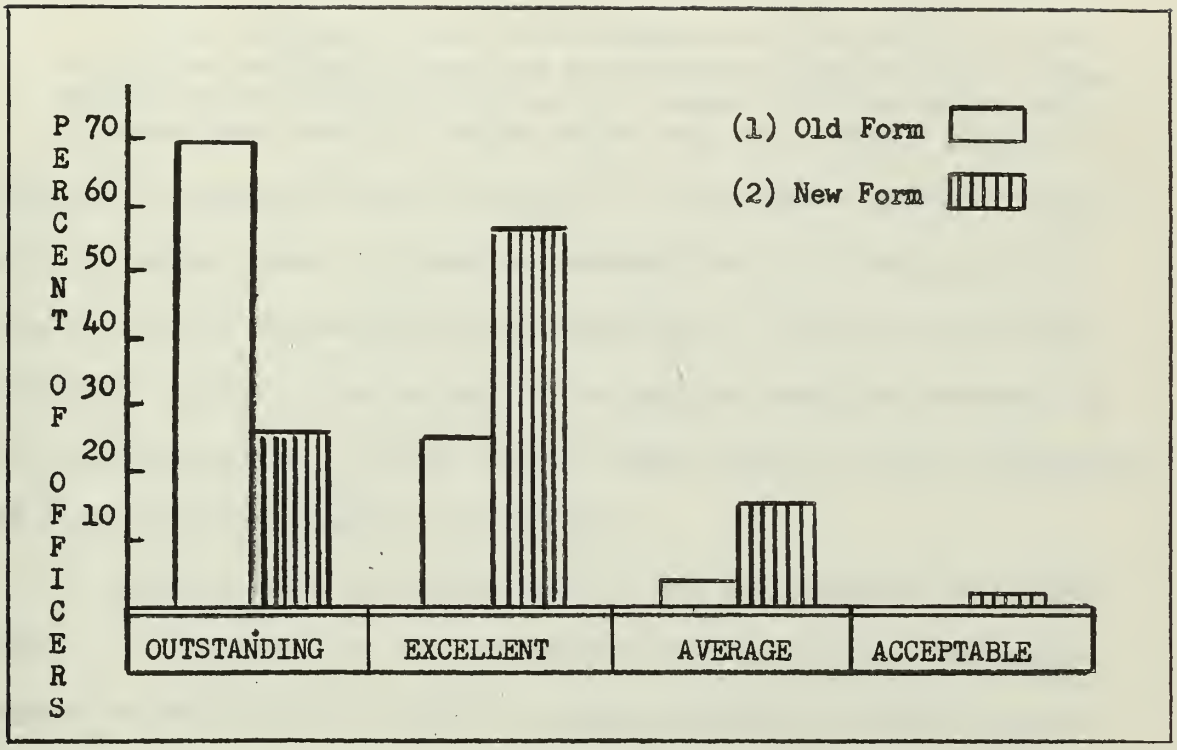

FIGURE III-2

EFFECTS OF FITNESS REPORT MARKS DUE TO CHANGE IN FORMAT

SAMPLE INFORMATION: Data obtained from Bureau of Naval Personnel Research Report 56-1, NavPers 18493, April 30, 1956.

RANK: ENSIGN THROUGH CAPTAIN

DESIGNATOR: 1100 and 1310

NUMBER: 2910

(1) Fitness Report Form, NAVPERS-310(Rev. 3-51). Percentage of officers graded on Item 13: To what degree has the officer reported on exhibited the following qualities?

(2) Fitness Report Form, NAVPERS-310(Rev. 3-54). Percentage of officers graded on Item 16(a): In comparison with other officers of his grade and approximate length of service, how would you designate this officer?

ing in personnel evaluation. Admiral Hobbs comments on this subject:

> In my opinion, there is no single item which would do more to improve our present marking and selection systems than a simple set of instructions approved at the highest level informing all officers just what the various marks mean on a fitness report.[11]

Although an instruction guide designed to train raters would not eliminate all rating errors, it must be admitted that such training would greatly increase the validity and reliability of fitness report data. Certainly, the key to the success of the entire selection procedure is the reporting senior. Fitness reports should reflect sound, considered, and discriminating judgments of officers.

In summary, early promotion has been and will continue to be Navy policy. It is based upon the recognition of the fact that the exceptionally talented officer should be rapidly promoted in order to take advantage of his potential. The sooner that he is ready for expanded responsibility, the longer will the Navy have use of his talents. Selection of such individuals poses a serious problem to every selection board, since it is difficult to determine who these individuals are. This difficulty stems from the lack of discriminating and valid records, caused primarily by rater errors. Selection boards need additional information upon which to base their decisions for early selection.

[11]Ibid. p. 48.

CHAPTER IV

PEER RATINGS

Despite any changes or modifications of evaluation procedures, selection processes, in the final analysis, will depend upon the information available to the selection board. This information is the connecting link between the individual officer and promotion. Lack of valid and useful information prejudices selection procedures, particularly as concerns early promotion, and causes serious morale problems among the officer corps. Referring to selection prodedures, Admiral Hobbs writes:

> Our selection system has one very serious defect, and that is, lack of reliable, valid, and comparative data in officers' records. If we use what is considered by many experimental psychologists as the most reliable method of predicting success for combat leaders, and that is, peer ratings, or what is commonly known as "buddy ratings", the validity of our present selection for promotion will be around the desired .90 level of confidence instead of .70.[12]

Basically, the peer rating technique involves each group member's evaluation of every other group member on a recognizable trait or on his overall effectiveness within the group. Normally the rater uses one of two methods: either he ranks his peers in relative order or he nominates a specified number whom he considers "high" or "low" on the factor being measured.[13] Both procedures yield a score which

[12]Ira E. Hobbs; Personal letter to CAPT Frank S. Craven, USN, dated September 24, 1963.

[13]E. P. Hollander, "Buddy Ratings: Military Research and Industrial Implications", Personnel Psychology, 7:3, Autumn, 1954, p. 385.

serves as an index of the ratee's status within his group relative to the rated factor. In this Chapter the validity and reliability of peer ratings will be determined and the applicability of this technique to naval officer evaluation will be analyzed.

I. VALIDITY OF PEER RATINGS

Peer ratings are a relatively new procedure for personnel assessment developed from a base provided by sociometry. While man has been evaluating his peers since the beginnings of recorded time, scientific analysis of this technique gained its first main recognition from research conducted within the armed services during World War II. A review of research findings will form the basis in this paper for determing the validity of peer evaluations.

One of the first results of peer ratings stem from a study initiated in 1944 by Williams and Leavitt, who were engaged as psychologists with the U.S. Marine Corps at Camp Lejeune, North Caroline.[14] Their task was to aid in selecting future combat leaders from among the officer candidates. They reasoned that inasmuch as the only usable criterion of successful leadership would be a subjective judgment or rating by superior officers, they might as well look for predictors among similar kinds of subjective judgments. Their question then became: Whose judgments are likely to be predictors of later performance? Those made by superior officers, teachers, or by friends and acquaintances of equal rank? In their study they attempted to answer each of

[14] Stanley B. Williams and Harold J. Leavitt, "Group Opinion as a Predictor of Military Leadership", Journal of Consulting Psychology, XI:6, November-December, 1947, p. 283-291.

these questions. During training the officer candidates were rated by their instructors and their peers on the basis of predicted performance as combat leaders. Subsequent ratings on combat performance as a criteria were made by the officers' battalion commanders following the Iwo Jima and Okinawa campaigns. At the termination of their study they concluded that group opinion was the only significant predictor of combat leadership relative to the other predictors tested--superior officer ratings at OCS, personality tests (MFRL and NDRC), GCT scores and OCS final grades.

In attempting to explain the relatively high correlation of sociometric group opinion as a predictor of combat leadership, Williams and Leavitt stated:

> Group members have more time to observe each other than do superior officers, they know each other in a realistic social context, and they react directly to each other's social-dominance behavior. All these are conditions favorable to informed judgment.[15]

In a comprehensive study conducted at the Signal Corps OCS Wherry and Fryer found that peer ratings possessed higher validity than superior ratings in predicting leadership performance. "Buddy ratings", they contend, "appear to be the purest measure of leadership...Nominations by class appear to be better measures of the leadership factor than any other variable".[16]

During most of the early studies of peer ratings the criteria utilized for validation have tended to be directly related to the in-

[15]Ibid. p. 291.

[16]R. J. Wherry and D. H. Fryer, "Buddy Ratings: Popularity Contest or Leadership Criterion?", Personnel Psychology, 2, 1949, p. 157.

itial character of the nominations. It had been assumed that peer nominations on leadership should be expected to correlate with a criterion derived from some variety of leadership behavior or performance measure. Hollander attached to the U.S. Naval School of Aviation Medicine, noted that little evidence existed regarding the applicability of peer ratings on leadership to performance or operational criteria unrelated to leadership behavior.[17] He conjectured that it may be that peer ratings identify characteristics of the individual which relate to criteria in the spheres of cognition, or personal adjustment, or such a complex as avility to solo an aircraft successfully. With this prospect in view, he investigated the relationship between peer nominations on leadership, made by aviation cadets in preflight school, and success or failure in flight training.

Fundamentally, he posed two questions: Do peer ratings on leadership during preflight correlate significantly with a pass-fail criterion for the entire flight training program? And, if so, how well do these nominations predict this criterion compared to other variables from the same preflight stage of training? In answer to the first question Hollander found that peer ratings significantly predicted success or failure in flight training. Relative to the second, two predictor variables, superiors' ratings on leadership qualities and ACE (College Level) Test scores, proved insignificant. The important point to be noted is the finding that peer nominations based upon leadership offer

[17]E. P. Hollander, "Peer Nominations on Leadership as a Predictor of the Pass-Fail Criterion in Naval Air Training", The Journal Of Applied Psychology, 38:3, 1954, pp. 150-153.

the possibility of predicting unrelated operational criteria. Hollander states that "the evidence supporting the validity of peer nomination is clear-cut, when the criteria used for validation are related to the initial character of the rating".[18] The fact that group ratings alone can predict such a complex criterion as successful completion of a flight training program extending some fourteen months beyond preflight, wherein the ratings were made, raises enthusiasm for the potential inherent in this technique.

A final example of the evidence in support of the validity of peer ratings will be the procedure employed at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point. This is an evaluation procedure, entitled Aptitude for the Service System, first placed into effect in 1943.[19] The system is designed to measure the leadership potential of each cadet in order to determine his suitability for commissioning in the United States Army. As currently operating the system is based upon the independent judgments of leadership potential by cadets. Twice during the academic year each cadet is rated on an expanded rank order scale by his company tactical officer, by each cadet in his class in his company, and by each cadet in classes senior to his in the company. The criterion for this rating is the rater's appraisal of each cadet's ability to command a group of men and in so doing to accomplish the assigned mission while maintaining high standards of discipline, morale, esprit, and administration. The ratings are combined mathematically, the tactical

[18]Ibid. p. 150.

[19]Office of Military Psychology and Leadership, The Aptitude for the Service System (West Point: U. S. Military Academy, February, 1961).

officer's rating being worth 1/3 of the total and the cadet ratings the remaining 2/3. Those individuals of high potential are identified for placement in positions of responsibility within the Corps of Cadets. Those of low potential are identified and provided counsel and guidance to assist them in overcoming their difficulties. In the event a cadet fails to respond to this guidance, it is necessary to separate him from the Corps.

In a study conducted among the Cadets in 1956 the following findings are highly significant:[20]

(1) The system is well considered by the Corps, the majority stating that they believed that this system is the best available.

(2) The raters are most confident that the ratings of their own class are the most accurate.

The first statistical study of this peer rating system was conducted in 1950 and involved the 280 graduates of the class of 1944. The Criterion of officer success was the average of all Efficiency Reports received on the officers from 1945 through 1949. Compared with this criterion were various USMA measures: over-all graduation standing, conduct record, aptitude standing and grades in certain academic courses. The statistical analysis is shown in Table IV-1, in which it is seen that the Aptitude ratings were the best single predictor of officer success. It should be noted that the closer the association of rater and ratee, the higher the validity of the Military Academy measures in all cases.

[20]Ibid. p. 2.

During the Korean conflict it was possible to gather data based upon combat performance. In 1951 special ratings on combat effectiveness were collected on officers serving in lettered companies of infantry regiments of the Eighth Army. The relationship of selected USMA measures to the criteria of combat effectiveness is shown in Table IV-2.

The findings of these studies affirm the value of the Aptitude System in predicting the performance of junior officers in both peacetime and war-time situations.

II. RELIABILITY OF PEER RATINGS

A review of the research literature on peer ratings points to the evidence of their reliability. In his study of peer ratings involving 690 trainees at the Naval OCS in Newport, Hollander concludes that "the peer nomination scores obtained at the end of the third week of training correlate at a high level (.95) with those scores obtained at the end of the sixth week".[21]

In a peer rating study conducted on 60 candidates at the Marine Corps OCS at Quantico, Virginia, Anderholter found that the average reliability coefficient of ratings over a three week interval was .71.[22]

Wherry and Fryer found, using samples of Signal Corps officer candidates, substantial reliability of peer nominations over a period of three months. The reliability coefficients obtained from the ratings of peers

[21] E. P. Hollander, Conditions Affecting the Military Utilization of Peer Ratings: The Newport Study, Part I: Reliability, (Navy Technical Report 1-56, ONR Contract 760(06), January, 1956) p. 1.

[22] O. F. Anderhalter, Peer Ratings (Navy Technical Report No. 2, ONR Contract (151-092) November 30, 1952) p. 12.

TABLE IV-1

VALIDITY COEFFICIENTS OF VARIOUS MILITARY ACADEMY MEASURES WITH VARIOUS RATER-RATEE CONTACT CLASS OF 1944

USMA MEASURES	ALL RATERS N=222	RATERS WITH LITTLE CONTACT N=66	RATERS WITH DAILY CONTACT N=156
CLASS STANDING			
Graduation (total)	.08	-.02	.11
1st Class Yr.	.12	.01	.16
APTITUDE FOR SERVICE			
1st Class Yr.	.38	.25	.44
PHYSICAL EDUCATION	.21	.20	.22
TACTICS			
3rd Class Yr.	.13	.02	.14
CONDUCT			
3rd Class Yr.	.18	.02	.24
MILITARY INSTRUCTOR TRAINING			
1st Class Yr.	.09	-.05	.14

Source: Report on the Aptitude for the Service System (West Point: USMA, February, 1961) p. 5.

TABLE IV-2

RELATIONSHIP OF SELECTED MILITARY ACADEMY MEASURES TO THE CRITERIA OF COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS. CLASSES OF 1944 THROUGH 1950

USMA MEASURES	CLASSES OF 1945-1950 N=43	CLASSES OF 1944-1948 N=159	CLASSES OF 1949-1950 N=150
CLASS STANDING AT GRADUATION	.29	.11	.28
APTITUDE FOR SERVICE RATING--1st CLASS YEAR	.52	.50	.49
PHYSICAL EDUCATION	.27	---	.21
TACTICS			
1st CLASS YEAR	.20	---	.24
2nd CLASS YEAR	.25	.02	.23
CONDUCT			
ALL CLASS YEARS	---	.28	.24
3rd CLASS YEAR	.07	.20	.12
SUM OF ACADEMIC COURSE GRADES	.04	.02	.13

Source: Report on the Aptitude for the Service System (West Point: USMA, February, 1961) p. 8.

greatly exceeded those obtained from supervisors after periods of one and three months.[23] Their data also suggested that peer ratings after one month measured the same things that supervisors' ratings did after four months of observation. They reported that "the reliability of nominations after four months is outstandingly higher than that of any of the other variables upon which the test was made. This is probably further evidence of the fact that the nominating technique has the property of early identification of the members of the group who constitute the two extremes of the leadership distribution".[24]

McClure, Tupes, and Daily conducted an evaluation of peer ratings among trainees at the Air Force OCS, wherein each candidate was required to rank all of the other condidates in his flight. They reported that the "correlation between the average rankings at the end of the third and fourth months was .91 and between those of the first and fourth month, .61".[25]

In evaluating the Aptitude for the Service System several investigations were made to assess the reliability of the ratings. The findings that successive semiannual ratings correlate highly suggest consistency of measurement. Table IV-3 presents intercorrelations (multiple correlations) for various aptitude ratings. The Camp Buckner rating, where the cadets are assigned with a different group than their normal cadet company is compared with the preceding Fourth Class Year rating

[23]R. J. Wherry and D. H. Fryer, op. cit.

[24]Ibid. p. 150.

[25]G. E. McClure, et al., Research on Criteria of Officer Effectiveness, Research Bulletin 51-8. (San Antonio: Human Resources Research Center, Lackland AFB, May, 1951) p. 6.

TABLE IV-3

INTERCORRELATIONS FOR VARIOUS APTITUDE RATINGS
CLASS OF 1951 (N=466)

	4TH CLASS 2nd TERM	BUCKNER	3rd CLASS 1st TERM	3rd CLASS 2nd TERM
4th CLASS 1st TERM	.93	.83	.84	.74
4th CLASS 2nd TERM		.88	.92	.84
BUCKNER			.90	.84
3rd CLASS 1st TERM			.92	.93

Source: Report on the Aptitude for the Service System (West Point: USMA, February, 1961) p. 12.

and the subsequent Third Class rating. Such studies have revealed reliability coefficients of the magnitude considered acceptable by professional test and measurement specialists of industry, government, and civilian universities.

Peer Ratings vs. Friendship Ratings. The primary criticism of peer ratings asserts that they are actually indicators of friendship standings rather than evaluations of performance. The evidence indicates that this is a false assumption. This does not mean that friendship or likeability are completely divorced from evaluation. Ethical and scientific considerations lead to the position that one should value a man for his instrinsic qualities and capacities alone, and discredit any emotional reaction to him. Tagiuri states that "in practice, feelings do come into play and can decisively affect the evaluation process. We vary in the degree to which we manage to com-

pensate for these feelings in an effort toward objectivity".[26] In other words, no matter what type of appraisal is made, the rater, being human, is subjected to some degree of emotion in evaluating personnel.

In his study of peer ratings by Naval Aviation Cadets at Pensacola, Hollander found that leadership nominations are, to a considerable extent, independent of the friendship choice of the nominators. He stated: "This finding tends to substantiate the fact that peer nominations are not mere 'popularity contests', but represent...evaluations of the individual's potential for performance largely independent of the measure of friendship".[27] Hollander found that an average of more than two out of three friends are disregarded on leadership nominations.

Concerning the Aptitude for the Service System, findings of a study on the Class of 1952 indicate that "popularity does not necessarily influence standing in Aptitude. Cadets holding elective offices are the most popular. While the greatest number of elective officers are average to above average rank in Aptitude, there is, at the same time, a substantial representation among the lower aptitude groups, as seen in Table IV-4.[28]

[26]Renato Tagiuri, Research Needs in Executive Selection (Boston: Harvard University, 1961), p. 119.

[27]E. P. Hollander, "Leadership, Followership, and Friendship: An Analysis of Peer Nominations", Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 50:2, March, 1955, p. 166.

[28]Aptitude for the Service System, op. cit., p. 13.

TABLE IV-4

APTITUDE AND POPULARITY
CLASS OF 1952

Aptitude Group		No. of Cadets in Each Group holding Elective office
Top	7%	30
Next	24%	78
Middle	38%	63
Next	24%	18
Bottom	7%	3

A similar study was repeated in 1960 with comparable results.

III. APPLICABILITY OF PEER RATINGS

In the first section of this Chapter an analysis of peer ratings was made based upon research findings. These ratings were found to be valid and reliable indicators of future performance. This section shall contain a study to determine the applicability of peer ratings to selection of Naval officers for early promotion. Any increase in the amount of valid information available to selection boards will increase the validity of early selections. How best can peer ratings be utilized to provide this increase of valid information? Three methods are proposed. The first method to be discussed is applicable to ratings made by officers of the ranks of Lieutenant (junior grade) and Lieutenant. The second method is applicable to officers of all ranks above Lieutenant Commander inclusive. The third method is applicable to all ranks.

Lieutenant (junior grade) and Lieutenant. Since the largest percentage of officers are concentrated within these two ranks, a system of peer rating is proposed which is adequate to accomplish the intended purpose and yet is simple for administrative purposes. Within each

activity each officer will be required twice per year to rate the other officers of his equivalent rank subject to the following requirements:

1. The rater and ratee must have served a minimum time of six months within the activity in order to obtain valid rather than speculative evaluations.

2. Ratees will be limited to a knowledgeable level. In such commands as carrier aircraft squadrons, destroyers, or submarines, all officers of equal rank can be expected to know one another. In large activities, such as an aircraft carrier or fleet staff, performance knowledge of one's peers is generally limited to a department. In this case, the listing of names available for rating will be limited to those officers of equivalent rank within a department.

3. Each rater will be required to submit his ratings directly to the Bureau of Naval Personnel. Figure IV-1 contains a sample peer rating form. This form will be prepared administratively by the command. On it will be listed the officers of equivalent rank including their file numbers and the name of the rater. The rater shall be required to sign the form as proof of its authenticity.

Explanation of the Form. The terms as used on the peer rating form have the following interpretations:

1. Most capable in operational and/or administrative performance. The distinction is made for two reasons; first, within an operational activity it is desirable that the rater distinguish between the two different types of performance. Secondly, within an administrative activity only a rating on administrative performance can be made.

2. Operational performance. This refers to the officer's demon-

PERSONAL--SPECIAL HANDLING REQUIRED

PEER RATING--(NAVPERS_____)

RATER: LT A. B. SEE COMMAND: ATKRON 45 DATE: 6/30/64

		RATEES:	FILE NO.
(1)	1.	A. ABLE	634216
	2.	B. BAKER	629361
	3.	C. CHARLIE	613942
	4.	D. DELTA	599872
	5.	E. ECHO	603429
	6.	F. FOXTROT	617601
	7.	G. GOLF	604523
	8.		
	9.		
	10.		

(2) Of the officers listed above select those who you consider to be the most capable in operational performance:_____

(3) Of the officers listed in (1) above select those who you consider to be the most capable in administrative performance:

(4) Of those officers listed in (2) and (3) who do you think is the most qualified for promotion?

SIGNATURE: _____

FIGURE IV-I

PEER RATING FORM FOR LIEUTENANT (JG) AND LIEUTENANT

strated performance of the weapons system to which he is assigned, as ship, aircraft, submarine. For example, in an aircraft squadron, an aviator must know the capabilities of his aircraft and the tactics developed for its use. He must also demonstrate the ability to use the aircraft. Capable operational performance involves effective knowledge and employment of the weapons system--it relates to the officer's overall ability in control of the weapons system and his leadership and judgment in the operational/tactical employment of the system.

3. Administrative performance. In evaluating administrative performance, the rater will ask himself such questions as:

How does the officer utilize men?

Is he effective in dealing with his men?

How does he plan his work?

Does he promote harmony in dealing with others?

Is his work complete and performed in time?

Upon receipt of this form in the Officer's Record Section within the Bureau, the ratings can be transcribed to the records of the designated officers and the form can then be destroyed.

All Ranks above Lieutenant Commander. For all ranks above Lieutenant it is proposed that peer rating follow free form analysis. The raters would be required to make annually a rank order list of their contemporaries who they believe are best fitted for promotion to the next higher rank. These forms could be made out for each individual officer selected, signed by the rating officer and filed in the rated officer's official record. For example, a single sheet of paper could

take the form as listed in Figure IV-2 to give the greatest amount of information of the ratee. It is not necessary that the rater and the ratee be currently serving in the same activity.

Peer Rating Applicable to All Ranks. There are many occasions in an officer's career when he is in a position to observe the performance of his peers or subordinates, although they are not officially attached to the same activity. Many occasions are repetitive over the course of time. Consider, for example, an officer in an aircraft squadron. He will frequently have contact with officers from other squadrons, or ship, or air station, as he conducts his squadron business. By the very nature of naval operations officers from various commands must interact to accomplish assigned tasks or missions. Through these contacts service reputations are built, but all too often they are not recognized officially. If superior performance is observed, there should be a way of reporting that performance for official record purposes.

The fitness reports of senior officers are frequently written by superiors on the basis of records and reports rather than on direct observation of performance. Take the commanding officer of a fleet tanker, for example. His performance is seldom observable by his reporting senior, but is frequently observed by the commanding officers of ships he services. If the latter officers evaluate his performance as outstanding, it is recommended that they be able to report this performance directly to the Bureau of Naval Personnel. Such reports would increase the validity of information available to selection boards. Particularly among senior officers, whose records are uniform-

PERSONAL--SPECIAL HANDLING REQUIRED

PEER RATING--(NAVPERS_____)

WHO: I rank CDR A. B. SEE, 478923/1310, SECOND out of FOUR COMMANDERS, personally known to me, as best qualified to occupt a higher position of authority and responsibility.

WHEN: I have known CDR A. B. SEE since we served together as Lieutenants on the STAFF of COMNAVAIRLANT in 1954-1956 and as squadron commanders in CVG-4 in 1963-1964.

WHY: CDR SEE is truly a professional officer. His administrative abilities in planning and coordinating were evident on the Staff of COMNAVAIRLANT, wherein his "can-do" attitude and initiative were largely responsible for phasing the A4D aircraft into fleet operations. As a squadron commander his outstanding performance is evident by his squadron's record on the last cruise. His pilots outflew and out-bombed every squadron in the Mediterranean. While accomplishing this enviable record, his crew was always ready to lend assistance to other squadrons aboard the ship--a tribute to his leadership ability. His energy and initiative are legendary.

Signed: J. G. SMITH, CDR, 483421

Present duty assignment: C.O. VA-45

FIGURE IV-2

PEER RATING FORM FOR LIEUTENANT COMMANDER AND ABOVE

ly outstanding, ratings by contemporaries would be most meaningful.

This method of rating would be on a voluntary basis only and would be executed by the rater at any time deemed appropriate, normally after continued observation of outstanding performance over a period of time. The same type form as illustrated in Figue IV-2 can be used for this purpose. For an officer of any rank with a large number of peer ratings, it would be a good indication to a selection board that his contemporaries thought highly of him. Few or no peer ratings in an officer's official jacket would also be a clear indication that his contemporaries had little faith in his ability as a naval officer.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. SUMMARY

The realistic evaluation of officer personnel is essential to the continued success of the Navy. For it is only through valid appraisals that the leaders of our future Navy can be recognized and selected. In recent years selection boards have been faced with a requirement to early select outstanding individuals in order that the Navy may derive maximum benefit of their talents.

In fulfilling this requirement selection boards are confronted with the difficult task of locating those officers who are truly outstanding. This task is difficult by reason of the fact that officers' records frequently do not contain sufficiently valid information upon which to base selection decisions. Thus, in selecting Captains for early promotion, for example, boards are faced with a group of records most of which are outstanding. Which officers among those having these closely grouped, over inflated fitness reports are truly outstanding? Under the Navy's present appraisal system, this question is difficult to answer with any degree of certainty.

In must be understood that this lack of valid information is not caused by any attempt to deceive on the part of the raters. Rather, it is caused by the various appraisal errors to which all raters of subordinates are prone. As better rating techniques are developed and as more attention is devoted to training the raters, fitness reports will increase in validity.

To augment the amount of valid information available to selection boards, the use of peer ratings has been proposed. This paper has reviewed the peer rating technique. Its validity and reliability have been substantiated by sociometric research findings. Finally, methods of applying this technique to Naval officer selection have been developed. It must be understood that this paper does not propose to replace the time tested appraisals by superior officers with peer ratings. The present system, although it has its faults, is basically a sound system which accomplishes its intended purpose and which generally enjoys the confidence of the officer corps. Appraisal remains the responsibility of command. It is proposed here that peer rating be adapted to the present selection system merely as a source of supplementary valid information. The more valid information available to selection boards, the more valid will be their selections.

Criticisms are easy, solutions are difficult. It has not been the intention of this writer to critize early selection procedures based upon the present appraisal system. Rather, the writer's intention has been to develop a supplementary appraisal system whereby early selections can be made with a higher degree of certainty that only those officers are being early promoted who are truly outstanding officers. It is further believed that this supplementary system is practical in its simplicity and would gain the confidence of the officer corps. Without this confidence any selection system is doomed to failure.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

To increase the amount of valid information available to selection boards in determining those officers who are fit for early promotion,

it is recommended that:

1. Increased emphasis by the Bureau of Naval Personnel be placed upon appraisal training.

2. A peer rating system be adopted such as developed in Chapter IV of this paper. It is further recommended that:

a. This system be adopted on a trial basis for the ranks of Captain and Rear Admiral, in order to evaluate fully its practicality and usefulness.

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